

Is marriage worth it for black women? These women say, 'Yes!'

Opinion

by Ama Yawson | July 26, 2012 at 4:00 PM



A black couple on their wedding day. © Katrina Brown - Fotolia.com

Month after month black women are bombarded with articles surrounding the “black marriage crisis.” On top of that, movies as old as *Waiting to Exhale* and as recent as *Think Like A Man* have provided wide screen images of beautiful and successful black women who are dying to have some man put a ring on it. Most of this media production seems to assume that all black women want to get married.

But is this an accurate assumption? The social research and anecdotal evidence regarding marriage would not necessarily lead to the conclusion that marriage is even desirable.

First, the fact that approximately half of all marriages in the United States end in divorce is certainly not encouraging. [Certain statistics suggest](#) that African-Americans are more likely to divorce than their white, Hispanic or Asian counterparts.

Second, while social research overwhelmingly suggest that men benefit from marriage through longer life spans, increased access to sex, lower rates of physical disease and lower rates of depression, the jury is still out on whether marriage equally benefits women. [Some studies suggest](#) that married women are less successful, more depressed and less healthy than their single sisters!

Third, the presumed economic benefits of marriage may also be diminishing for some women. With [general male unemployment exceeding female unemployment](#) for both the general population and the black population, it appears as if many black women and non-black women believe that marrying men, including the fathers of their own children, presents economic and emotional burdens that are simply not commensurate with any potential rewards.

Sadly, women assessing this cold, hard fact may feel as though marrying a man would be like assuming the care of another child, because their potential mates would not provide additional earnings and would not engage in their fair share of domestic work such as cooking, cleaning and child-rearing. Perhaps it is for this reason that today — for women of ALL races — more than half of births to women under 30 are

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occurring outside the institution of marriage.

For women whose potential mates are gainfully employed, marriage may bring significant economic benefits as household bills are split in two and surplus cash may be used for nice family vacations, domestic help, private schools or piano lessons for the kids.

But still, a high-earning single woman or a single woman with family and a supportive social network should still be able to afford or gain access to child-care help, extra-curricular activities, and the other niceties (or necessities?) that go into raising productive little ones. Such a woman could presumably enjoy the company of family, good friends and an exciting sexual companion here and there — without the burden of housework and other inequalities that plague many women in their marriages.

So we ponder the question: is marriage worth it for black women?

With the odds being difficult that many black women will find a partner who matches them economically and socially, and the extreme length some are going through to get, keep, date, or even share a man, if you can take care of a child yourself — or don't want children — some might wonder "what's the point?"

Is there something to be said about marriage that transcends the allure of fulfilling the inner little girl's dream of receiving dazzling jewels, wearing a stunning white gown and enjoying a kiss from someone dressed like prince at the wedding ball? The vast majority of the single and married black women that I asked answered with a resounding "yes!"

Although Marie-Gabrielle Isidore, the twenty-something and single CEO and Co-Founder of [Brand Haiti](#), concedes that marriage can appear scary because of discouraging statistics, she told theGrio, "Marriage is something that is extremely beautiful and I look forward to it one day." Marie-Gabrielle bemoans the negative media image of black women as not being worthy of love and protection from men and or society's institutions. She feels that black people should work towards strengthening and empowering the institution, especially considering the ills of fatherlessness, which is linked to the poverty that severely impacts blacks.

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